

**From:** "jerry.c.carpenter@xo.com%inter2" <jerry.c.carpenter@xo.com>  
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Email: jerry.c.carpenter@xo.com  
FirstName: jerry  
LastName: carpenter  
Address1: 222 south walnut bend  
Address2:  
City: cordova  
State: Tennessee  
zipcode: 38018

Question1: Comment: The goal of new farmers and ranchers entering the agriculture industry should be to first stabilize their income so as to avoid high debt levels. One way to do this is to put marginal cropland up for reserve program enrollment. Programs like CRP, WRP, and GRP are great examples of agriculture programs that allow farmers and ranchers to use the best of their acreage for farming and conserve the rest, which has the added benefits of improved soil and water quality. The focus of the 2007 Farm Bill should be providing America's farmers and ranchers options so they can farm the best, and conserve the rest. This type of policy would allow new participants into agriculture a better foothold and help them maintain the agricultural lifestyle that has been the backbone of rural America for generations.

Question2: Comment: For the US to remain competitive on a global scale it is imperative the cropland is used to its utmost efficiency. This is why conservation programs like CRP and WRP are critical to US agriculture. These programs allow the marginal cropland to be put to use for public benefit (better water quality and quantity, improved soil, wildlife habitat, etc.) and allow the bulk of resources to be invested in the best-performing cropland. More efficient use of cropland will also reduce some of the need for subsidization of crops because money will not have to be spent on squeezing substandard crops out of substandard cropland. Conservation programs should and must be touted as viable solutions for US competitiveness, and are a vital part of the 2007 Farm Bill.

Question3: Comment: Programs from the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill could be expanded to allow smaller farms to be able to compete with larger corporate ones by farming/ranching their most productive acre and allowing the less productive acres to become wildlife habitat through programs like CRP, WRP, EQIP, and WHIP. These programs allow farms to compete by allowing them to concentrate their farming on only the most productive land and not sink precious resources into seeding, fertilizing, and spreading pesticide on marginal cropland, while receiving income from the reserved lands to stabilize their income and creating wildlife habitat.

Question4: Comment: A strong conservation title in the 2007 Farm Bill benefits everyone. Farmers and ranchers benefit from the additional income from programs like CRP and WRP, and the public benefits by having better water quality and quantity and improved soil quality and more land for wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation. The 2007 Farm Bill is an opportunity to shift away from the standard of plowing and sowing everywhere, even marginal cropland, and towards a policy of "farming the best and conserving the rest" that will allow for more wildlife habitat and improve water quality by reducing erosion.

Question5: Comment: Conservation easement programs like CRP and WRP work to the benefit of rural economies as they allow farmers to not waste precious money and resources trying to grow crops on marginal farmland. Conservation programs also eliminate the need for expensive seed, fertilizer and pesticides for use on those marginal croplands, freeing up more money for the farmer to put back into the local economy. Furthermore, with the money saved by not working marginal lands, and with the income from the easement, farmers and ranchers have a more stabilized income and can develop new farming and ranching methods that may not have been available on a previously strained budget.

Question6: Comment: The 2007 Farm Bill could be an opportunity to also expand the market for non-agricultural products through a strengthened Conservation title. Lands that are set aside as reserves in programs like WRP and CRP open up new opportunities for landowners in the tourism and recreation field. CRP and WRP lands are ideal for outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, birdwatching, mountain biking and an assortment of other outdoor activities that spur rural economies through the industries that support these pursuits. The lands remain under the control of the owner, but the benefits can be shared by the entire community.